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Wiki Assignment 1

ED 7201

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Action Research:

Diane (2011) explains action research as a five stage process that focuses on problems that exists within the education system. Action research is implemented by educators as a form of self improvement in terms of teaching practices (p.171). The five stages of action research include determining a problem, collecting information, analyzing and measuring the data, concluding a result and creating a plan of action (p.172). Action research enables researchers to raise awareness and act upon the problems that affect student’s education.

Defining the problem: Why are students in NYC not reading on grade level?

A research topic that exists within the educational system is the fact that a large number of our nation’s students are not reading on grade level. Students are not reading on grade level because there is not enough emphasis on reading comprehension and phonetics within the classroom (Brenda et al., 2009, p. 191). When phonetics and vocabulary are taught, these skills are not used in readings to comprehend the text. Student may be able to understand the vocabulary and are capable of reading the word but this does mean that the student understands what is being read. Students become frustrated when they are not taught how to apply their decoding skills with the text that is being read (Cooper, n.d.).

Prior Research:

Elementary students in NYC are required to take state exams such as the English Language Arts Test. This exam is used to determine a student’s reading proficiency based on a series of reading passages and questions. All state exams are scored on a four point system. Based on the English Language Arts Chart, if students receive a score of 3 or 4, they are considered to have met the reading standard and grade level. If students receive a score of 1 or 2, they are below reading level and do not meet the state standards (New York City Department of Education, 2011).

The Alliance of Excellent Education (2006) shows factual data that eight million students in the nation read below grade level. These students are able to decode texts but are unable to comprehend what they read. This fact sheet shows statistics of students in grades 4-12 that read below grade level.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2009) displays achievement scores based on reading proficiency. In 2009, 46% of large city public school in the fourth grade read below reading level. Compared to the Nation’s public school, only 34% of fourth graders are below reading level.

Cons: (why is it bad that students read below grade level?)

1. Students will struggle with other subjects. From simple tasks of reading directions to analyzing scientific research. The inability to read at grade level will prevent a student from excelling in other subjects (Mounce, n.d.).
2. Students will not be ready for the future if they don’t know how to read at their level. This in turn will affect their career. (ATC, p.1).

Current Instructional Strategies:

The instructional strategy currently used in the classroom is read aloud. Read aloud increases a student’s ability to comprehend the text, build on vocabulary and to become familiar with sound (Cummins & Stellmeyer-Gerade, 2011, p.400). However, as Brenda et al. (2009) has mentioned, students whom are below reading level, struggle with reading due to basic skills such as phonetics and phonemes (p.171). Although read aloud is important, students should also learn the basic phonetic skills to read independently. Instead of becoming familiar with the sound of a letter, being able to phonetically read and comprehend the alphabetic letter is also important.

Reserving classroom time for independent reading is an important part of reading and comprehension. All students are diverse and come from different backgrounds. Some students are not given the opportunity to read independently at home. Independent reading is used to motivate students into the concept that reading is enjoyable. When used properly, independent reading can help struggling readers to become successful readers (Routman, 2002, p. 84). When students read often, they are able to practice their reading skills to read higher leveled books. Giordiano (2011) explains the process of independent reading where students are taught how to choose a book based on their reading level and what they find interest in reading (p.612). When students read books that are too difficult to understand they are discouraged to continue reading. These students will either pick books that are below their level for easy reading or pretend to read during independent reading time (Routman, 2002, p.84). Monitoring each student’s growth in reading is vital to the success of independent reading.

Practitioners/ Theorists:

Caldenhead (1987) explains that the idea of grading a student’s ability to read originated from William McGuffy’s practice that different age groups need different reading materials. Their reading comprehension is based on the difficulty of the text. However, measuring reading levels stemmed from Francis Galton’s theory of mental measurement. Social and psychological development arises from knowledge. Complexities such as mental thinking can be measured. James Cattell believed that anything complex can be measured and reduced to a simplistic version. Mental measuring was introduced to public schools in 1922. Lewis Terman was the first person to suggest that all students should be given an intelligence test (p. 436).

Since a person’s mind can be measured based on retention and comprehension of various educational knowledge, reading levels and text gradients were discovered. Fountas and Pinnell uses small group guided reading practices to develop comprehension skills based on a student’s reading level. It was from this practice that Fountas and Pinnell’s found a need of using A-Z text gradients (Thomas, n.d.).

Independent Variable: (What is the proposed intervention?)

In 2009, Brenda, Buck and Giles conducted research based on teaching first graders literacy skills, such as phonetics and decoding texts versus read aloud. Below average students benefitted from learning phonetics and decoding texts. Their reading comprehension increased greatly as opposed to average readers. Average and advanced readers benefit from the creative challenge seen in read aloud (p. 191). Therefore, my proposed intervention is to incorporate both phonetics and read aloud into everyday readings at an early age. Teaching phonetics and decoding skills at an early age is necessary for students to achieve above average reading levels. As students grow older, it is harder to learn phonemes. If students are not taught the skills to learn how to read then they will not be able to read at grade level. However, if there are students that are above or average at reading it is necessary to incorporate a creative challenge from read aloud. When teachers model how to read a book, students are able to incorporate this skill during their independent readings.

Throughout a student’s academic education it is important to teach strategical skills in how to apply phonetics into comprehension of text. Just as how phonetics should be taught at an early age, strategizing reading skills should be emphasized as well. Some students can understand how to decode words and texts but are not able to apply these skills into reading (Cooper, n.d). Therefore, it is highly valuable for teachers to model, teach and practice basal reading skills and application into various types of readings.

Another intervention includes reading programs offered to students early in the morning and after school. Even with a focus on reading during classroom activities, many students below the reading level require additional time and guidance to develop basic reading skills that are necessary to read at grade level. Providing students with opportunity for additional reading help in the morning and afterschool enables students to increase their reading skills. Santa and Hoien (1999) noticed the main difference between struggling readers and average readers are the rate and process of comprehending instructional phonetics. Offering reading programs will enable students to gain skills in word recognition, reading texts and writing (p.54).

Independent reading is an important part of education curriculum if used properly. My proposed intervention takes Giordano’s independent reading process one step further. Students should be able to read at their grade level and to find books of interest. However, teachers are encouraged to use different leveled books to encourage a student’s reading and improve their reading level (Glasswell & Ford, 2010, p.57). For example, a struggling 4th grade student is reading on an M level. Instead of having the student read on level M and wait until they are comfortable to move to a level O, teachers should slowly integrate level N and O books into the student’s daily reading. The appropriate process of monitoring and measuring student’s reading level will help teachers determine if students are ready for a challenge in text or need additional help.

Dependent Variable: (How will you define (construct) and measure your intervention?) similar to experiment and assessment.

1. Focus on phonetics and decoding in grades prek-1, while incorporating read aloud: Being able to apply reading skills during independent or group readings are important. Formal assessment with use of group collaboration and class discussion can be used to determine if students comprehend read aloud. Informal assessments such as homework and quizzes can be used to measure a student’s ability to understand phonetic and decoding skills taught during class.

2. Reading programs: For students that are reading below grade level it is best to in small guided reading group. This enables the teacher to scaffold each group’s reading skills and to determine what further skills need to practiced. During each guided reading conference the teacher will monitor students to determine a student’s reading progress. This can be measured by keeping a teachers journal on each student.

3. Focus on Independent Reading: In order to measure the success of reading comprehension and fluency, students will be assessed based on their reading skills by using a running record. Teacher will hold individual reading conferences to log in students academic growth.

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